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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 2882
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 4486
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2261
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 3444
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000174

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [KDEM](#) [NP](#)
SUBJECT: NEPAL: PLA RECRUITMENT DRIVE UPS THE ANTE

REF: KATHMANDU 164

Classified By: Ambassador Nancy J. Powell. Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

Summary

¶1. (C) The commander of the Maoist People's Liberation Army announced March 2 that he intended to recruit more than 11,000 new combatants, allegedly in reaction to the February 28 decision by the governing parties to sanction the recent recruitment by the Nepal Army of some 3,000 new recruits. The reaction of the other parties to the PLA announcement has been extremely negative. On March 4, the Ambassador urged a Maoist minister to stop PLA recruitment and visiting Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary Michael Owen made the same point with the Foreign Secretary. The P-5 representatives in Kathmandu are considering requesting a meeting with Prime Minister Dahal on the issue. The UN Mission in Nepal has already urged the Prime Minister to stop recruitment by the Maoist army. Meanwhile, a court case related to Nepal Army recruiting is pending in the Supreme Court, and PLA recruitment appears to be going ahead, although how seriously is unclear. The peace process may not completely unravel as a result of PLA recruitment, but it is on increasingly shaky footing.

PLA Announces Recruitment Drive

¶2. (C) On March 2 People's Liberation Army (PLA) Chief Nanda Kishore Pun (aka Pasang) announced the PLA would be recruiting new members to "regain" its 2006 strength of 31,315. The UN Mission in Nepal counted over 31,000 persons in the 28 cantonments during the first phase of verification. UNMIN ultimately only found that 19,601 were qualified. The rest were minors or recruited after the cease-fire came into effect in May 2006. Information and Communications Minister Mahara explained to Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary Owen and the Ambassador on March 4 that the announcement was a direct reaction against the decision of the five governing parties on February 28 to not halt the training of the 3,100 recent recruits by the Nepal Army (NA). He claimed that Prime Minister Dahal was unaware of the PLA decision to recruit. The PLA, he said, acted on its own. Legally speaking, the PLA now falls under the authority of the four-party Special Committee established in January 2009, which the PM chairs. Controversy had raged over the NA's

recruitment -- its third since the signing of the peace agreements in late 2006 -- after Defense Minister Thapa, a Maoist, spoke out publicly against the recruitment in December 2008. Then UNMIN Special Representative Ian Martin publicly reiterated at that time his view that any recruitment by either the NA or the PLA was in violation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Arms Monitoring Agreement. This legal interpretation was rejected by the NA and its supporters, most vocally among the Nepali Congress. They argued that the NA was entitled to fill positions to offset attrition.

Opposition by Other Parties and UNMIN

13. (C) On March 3, Nepali Congress (NC) President Girija Prasad Koirala came out strongly against a PLA recruitment drive. Koirala said that the Prime Minister had assured him that he would call off the PLA recruitment drive in a meeting that same day. Minister Mahara confirmed to A/DAS Owen and the Ambassador on March 4 that the PM had indeed made that promise to Koirala. On March 4, the President of the Communist Party of Nepal - United Marxist Leninist (UML), Jhalanath Khanal, also announced that the PLA had to stop its recruitment bid as it posed a threat to the peace process. UNMIN Senior Political Adviser Kathy Jones told Emboff March 4 that UNMIN Representative Karin Landgren had strongly urged PM Dahal to put an end to PLA recruitment during a meeting on March 3. Dahal had agreed that PLA recruitment was not right and had said he would deal with it. Jones told Emboff March

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5 that she made the same point to PLA commander Pasang during their meeting on March 4. Ram Mahat, a Nepali Congress member of the Special Committee, informed the Ambassador March 4 that he had asked the PM to call a Committee meeting, but that the lack of a quorum (several members are traveling) would prevent a session any time soon.

Supreme Court Cases Pending

14. (C) The actions by the governing parties and the PLA on recruitment come in the midst of pending litigation. In response to a writ petition filed by a local human rights organization, INHURED, questioning the constitutionality of NA recruitment, on February 22, single judge of the Supreme Court issued a stay order. On March 2, a two-judge Supreme Court bench delivered divided opinions regarding the previous stay order and referred the case to a full bench of the Supreme Court for a final verdict. Since then, INHURED has filed another case requesting an order staying PLA recruitment. The full bench's hearing has yet be scheduled.

PLA Recruitment Ongoing

15. (C) As of March 5, some PLA division commanders have already distributed recruitment forms. Press interviews with some applicants indicate it is primarily those who are unemployed and have no other job prospects who were picking-up and completing the forms. UNMIN Political Advisor Jones confirmed March 5 that UNMIN monitors had observed some recruiting activity around a few of the main cantonments, but nothing of any large scale. She is of the view that Pasang is attempting to prevent the NA recruitment from happening and does not intend to recruit seriously. As of March 5, UNMIN had made several comments to the media reiterating its opposition to NA and PLA recruitment.

U.S. Actions To Date

16. (C) Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary Owen raised U.S. concerns about PLA recruitment and the implications for the peace process during his meeting with Foreign Secretary

Acharya on March 4. Acharya agreed to pass on our concerns to the Foreign Minister and the Prime Minister. Indian Ambassador Sood told the Ambassador March 4 when she solicited his views that he was quite concerned and took the issue very seriously. In contrast, British Ambassador Hall, told the Ambassador that he saw this as posturing by the PLA/Maoists and was not worried. However, he has subsequently become much more concerned. On March 5, in response to Minister Mahara's comments to A/DAS Owen and the Ambassador about PLA recruitment, the Ambassador stressed that Mahara's explanation raised serious concerns about control of the PLA and requested Mahara raise our concerns with the PM. Post is working with the British Ambassador to schedule a meeting of the P-5 to consider a demarche to urge the PM to act now.

POWELL